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Subject: French reply to Soviet Note

French minister told Merchant today French worried about last para of Western reply (their para 7, our para 14) because as presently phrased susceptible of being played by Soviets as evidence Western willingness to discuss Berlin question as such. West in countering, would be obliged to point to qualification that it ready to discuss Berlin only repeat only within wider framework. This might make position of West seem less reasonable that it is.

To remedy difficulty French propose either drop paragraph on theory substance of paragraph already contained in their para 5, or reword to read as follows:

"7. - Le Gouvernement francais serait heureux de savoir si le Gouvernement sovietique est pret a des negociations sur cette base

entire

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entre les quatre puissances interessees, en vue de rechercher une solution du probleme allemand dans son ensemble, duquel le probleme de Berlin ne peut etre separe".

Department opposed to dropping para. West should close on note of willingness negotiate. First reaction to new French text of para is ~~xxx~~ it successfully overcomes difficulty which probably fairly real.

Murphy ~~Hunter~~ ACTING "
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